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Department of State

TELEGRAM

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S E C R E T STATE 120318

EXDIS

SUBJECT: AMB. GODLEY'S APPEARANCE BEFORE SYMINGTON SUB-COMMITTEE

REF: A. BANGKOK 9049; B. STATE 117098

AMB. GODLEY WENT TO TESTIFY AT HEARING OF SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS SUB-COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL COMMITMENTS ON JULY 21. GROUND RULES TO WHICH SUB-COMMITTEE HAD RELUCTANTLY AGREED THE PREVIOUS DAY WERE THAT DUE TO SENSITIVITY OF ACTIVITIES IN LAOS, THERE WOULD BE ONE TRANSCRIPT ONLY, AND THAT HELD BY STATE DEPARTMENT. JOURNALISTS AND TELEVISION CAMERAMEN WERE PRESENT AS HEARING BEGAN WITH SWEARING IN OF AMB. GODLEY AND READING INTO RECORD OF ABSHIRE LETTER TO SYMINGTON ON GROUND RULES. HOWEVER, BEFORE JOURNALISTS EXIT, AT SENATOR FULBRIGHT'S INSISTANCE, IT HAS DECIDED TO REVERT TO A NO-TRANSCRIPT PROCEEDING.

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2. AMB. GODLEY WAS TAKEN OFF OATH AND SESSION WAS CHANGED FROM HEARING TO A TOP SECRET BRIEFING. SENATORS MANSFIELD, SYMINGTON, FULBRIGHT, COOPER, SPARKMAN, JAVITS, AIKEN AND CHURCH WERE AT VARIOUS TIMES PRESENT, PRINCIPALLY IN THE MORNING, WHILE AFTERNOON CONTINUATION LARGELY DEVOTED TO DETAILED QUESTIONS BY COUNSEL ROLAND PAUL.

3. SUBSTANTIVE PORTION OF HEARING WAS CONDUCTED IN BUSINESSLIKE AND UNACRIMONIOUS FASHION. AMBASSADOR DID NOT READ PREPARED STATEMENT, BUT RATHER ANSWERED QUESTIONS AND EXCHANGED VIEWS FROM BEGINNING. SUCH FORMAT AS THERE WAS CONSISTED OF UPDATING INFORMATION PROVIDED COMMITTEE IN OCTOBER HEARINGS ON LAOS. THERE WERE NO MAJOR SURPRISES IN THE HEARING.

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4. SENATORS' REMARKS FOCUSED MORE ON STATE DEPARTMENT DESIRE FOR SPECIAL SECRECY ABOUT LAOS, AND ON GENERAL CRITICISM OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN POLICY, THAN ON SUBSTANTIVE PROBLEMS OF LAOS ITSELF. FULBRIGHT, HOWEVER, INDICATED BELIEF OUR POLICY IS UNJUSTIFIABLY INFILCTING WAR ON INOFFENSIVE LAD PEOPLE, AND THAT WE ARE "USING" MEDEVAC, WHILE CHURCH SAID THAT COMPARISON OF OUR COSTS SUPPORTING LAOS, AND LAOS' OWN GNP, SHOWED IT WAS A POTEMKIN COUNTRY. SUB-COMMITTEE WAS ATTENTIVE TO POSSIBILITY OF UNWRITTEN COMMITMENT TO LAOS, SOUVANNA PHOUVANH, VANG PAO OR MEDEVAC, AND IT WAS CLEAR THIS LINKED TO FEAR OF "ANOTHER VIETNAM."

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5. LATER IN THE DAY ON THE 21ST, SENATORS FULBRIGHT, MANSFIELD AND SYMINGTON SPOKE TO SECRETARY ROGERS ABOUT THEIR OBJECTIONS TO THE PROCEDURES PROPOSED BY THE DEPARTMENT, AND FULBRIGHT'S COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT WERE CARRIED ON CBS TELEVISION.

6. AMBASSADOR CONSULTED WITH PRESIDENT NIXON, SECRETARY ROGERS, MR. KISSINGER BEFORE DEPARTURE FROM WASHINGTON JULY 24. HIS ETA VIENTIANE VIA LONDON AND ATHENS REMAINS APPROXIMATELY AUGUST 4.

(2P-3. RQSTR.)

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